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PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

PUERPERAL FEVER:

WHEREIN

THE NATURE OF THAT DISEASE

IS INVESTIGATED,

AND A METHOD OF CURE,

WHICH HAS HITHERTO PROVED SUCCESSFUL,

RECOMMENDED.

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

BY

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PREFACE.

THOUGH the cuſtom, ſo prevalent among modern authors, might alone have tempted the writer of the following Obſervations to introduce them by a prefatory addreſs, could he have effected this without inconvenience; yet, occupied as he conſtantly is by more neceſſary avocations, and naturally averſe from appearing in print, he ſhould have waved this ceremony, as well as have totally avoided publicly delivering his ſentiments on the preſent occaſion, had he not had other motives, than thoſe of complying with faſhion, as incentives to his undertaking.—Theſe motives, as he hopes will be perceived on examining the work, were—To give a fair and explicit account of what he had himſelf obſerved in treating a very dangerous diſeaſe—By the example of his ſucceſs, to lead others more candidly to examine the relative merits of certain remedies propoſed for its relief—To endeavour to render more general the early employment of a very important one, which, though ſo highly extolled on the continent, continues to be too much neglected by the practitioners of this country—To explain, ſo far as

facts and obſervations, and immediate inductions from them, will enable him, the TRUE NATURE of the diſeaſe, and thereby to lay a more permanent foundation for rationally conducting the CURE—And from ſuch an explanation likewiſe, compared with the effects commonly produced by certain claſſes of remedies, to ſhew which of them ſhould be avoided, which cautiouſly employed, and which of them, and at what time each, ſhould be principally depended on. Previous to his fulfilling theſe intentions, however, it may not be improper to deſcend a little more into particulars, and to remark, that the ſubſequent concluſions and directions have for ſome time conſtituted the ſubject of the Lectures, which, in his general Courſe of Midwifery, he has given on the Puerperal Fever; having been originally drawn from an attentive conſideration of what others had ſaid upon the ſubject, compared with what he had himſelf an opportunity of obſerving, they have hitherto in real practice been juſtified by an uninterrupted ſucceſs: he ſhould therefore think himſelf highly culpable in withholding them longer from the Public, while he daily receives accounts of the diſeaſe proving ſo fatal, under the care of others.—While he is ſo far explicit, however, in his declaration, let him not be accuſed of preſumption, or of harbouring the idea that he is, either in point of abilities or diſcernment, far ſuperior to the generality, or perhaps equal to many others concerned in the profeſſion.

profeſſion. The opinions of different perſons generally vary much, relative to the ſame ſubject; and this muſt particularly be the caſe with regard to diſeaſes, where, from the preſent uncertain ſtate of medicine, ſcarcely any thing can be brought to a poſitive demonſtration. That his ſentiments, therefore, ſhould in ſome reſpects appear different from thoſe of other writers on the ſubject, will not ſeem unreaſonable; and, as they have led him to ſuch practical concluſions as have, after the teſt of repeated trials, been crowned with ſucceſs, they will, he doubts not, be conſidered with candour. He ſhould, indeed, be extremely ſorry that his aſſertions bordered ſo nearly on Quackery, as to avow that the treatment he ſhall recommend will uniformly prove infallible; but this he can with truth advance, that he has himſelf never loſt a patient as yet in this diſeaſe, though he has had no inconſiderable number under his care; and though at leaſt twenty of them, who have, within the courſe of the laſt three years, been treated under the immediate obſervation of many of his pupils, while they poſſeſſed, from irregularities, equally debilitated conſtitutions with the more opulent, laboured, at the ſame time, under the aggravated circumſtances of poverty and diſtreſs.

To avoid the imputation too of an affectation of novelty, or of being blindly led away in the purſuit of that phantom, he would have it underſtood, that he does not conceive either his ſenti-

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ments or his treatment to be wholly new; for, with reſpect to the former, though not fully explained, many hints to the ſame purpoſe may be diſcovered in a variety of other writers; and with regard to the latter, a principal part of it has certainly been mentioned, and ſtrongly inculcated, in another publication. But ſtill, as every practical hint, which leads to a leſs fluctuating mode of treatment, in a diſorder of this nature, becomes of the utmoſt importance, and as experience daily proves to him, that a greater comparative ſucceſs attends his practice, than that of ſome other gentlemen of the profeſſion, he thinks himſelf juſtified in publiſhing the preſent work; and his end in doing ſo will be fully anſwered, if he is only enabled to draw their attention to a plan, which, whether conſidered as novel, or otherwiſe, ſeems to bid fair to check the future progreſs of this alarming diſeaſe. Further, though he allows that his publication does not entirely conſiſt of new matter, he ſhould hope it would appear that he does not obtrude upon the world a mere repetition of what had before been frequently ſaid on the ſame ſubject; for, while he acknowledges that ſome ſimilarity may obtain, both in the Ideas conveyed, and the Practice recommended, between the preſent and other works, yet a perfect one by no means does; and he believes that it will be readily allowed, by every candid and judicious obſerver, that in acute diſeaſes, eſpecially ſuch as the

Puerperal

Puerperal Fever, attention to the moſt minute circumſtances becomes abſolutely neceſſary; and hence, that though the difference ſhould at firſt ſight appear trivial, if leading to a more ſucceſsful treatment, it will in the end be deemed important. Notwithſtanding the notoriety of this fact, however, ſuch a minute attention appears to be by far too much neglected in real practice, ariſing not unfrequently, perhaps, from too great a deference for authority, which leads to too high a faith in certain remedies any how exhibited; or more immediately, as the preſent writer is inclined to ſuppoſe, from receiving too implicitly general concluſions, and applying theſe indiſcriminately under a variety of ſituations; while, in infectious febrile diſeaſes in particular, experience pretty conſtantly proves, that avoiding ſources of aggravation of the ſymptoms, and the well-timed uſe of a few, and frequently not the moſt powerful medicines, will do more towards a cure, than the blind adminiſtration of any one claſs, or the ſucceſſive employment of all the more active remedies with which medicine ſupplies us. With reſpect to the immediate plan of the work, the writer will endeavour to be as conciſe as it is poſſible, without becoming obſcure, as it is his intention that the preſent production ſhould be examined only by thoſe who are already intelligent in the profeſſion, capable, therefore, of deciding with accuracy, and of comprehending fully the merits of ſuch tranſi-

tory allusions as he may be under a necessity of making to certain established doctrines or received opinions, in order to explain more clearly the foundation on which his practice has been conducted. Though by its title, therefore, the book is said to consist of Practical Observations, yet some reasoning will, from necessity, be introduced, as no medical man, of the description above alluded to, will, he thinks, support mere EMPIRICISM so far as to assert, that reasoning, when immediately drawn from real observation, should be entirely excluded, either at the patient's bedside, or in practical dissertations; and he believes that, with a great luminary of medicine, it will be allowed, that no physician, not even the professedly Practical Sydenham, ever treated his patients without being in some degree guided by reasoning; and though idle HYPOTHESIS should ever be excluded, yet that just INDUCTION should always be admitted,— From a desire of being concise, then, he shall avoid going minutely into the history of the disease, or an enumeration of the accessory symptoms which frequently accompany it, and only in a cursory way mention those he has himself observed; and always do this with an allusion to the more fully detailed accounts given of them by others.

PRACTICAL

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE PUERPERAL FEVER.

THE Puerperal Fever, in all the caſes which I have ſeen, has been uſhered in by the general ſymptoms of *pyrexia*, not commonly obtaining indeed to a violent degree at firſt, though in a few inſtances the ſhivering fit was at the commencement very conſiderable, and in ſome caſes frequently repeated. In the greater number, however, the diſeaſe came on in a more inſidious way, the patient, previous to the commencement of the pain, having complained only of a little numbneſs of the lower extremities, and a ſenſe of cold thrilling down the back. This, in different caſes, happened at uncertain periods from the termination of delivery: in moſt of the patients it was not till the third day, though in one woman, who was delivered in my lying-in ward, the ſymp-

toms began within the courſe of eighteen hours from the termination of labour, and proceeded ſo rapidly, that when I ſaw her, about ſix hours afterwards, I was for ſome time apprehenſive of her being beyond the power of medicine. In ſome other inſtances the diſeaſe did not commence till the fourth day; and in one, did not do ſo till the eighth: but I never ſaw it come on at a later period than this, after a delivery at the full term, though I remember an inſtance where ſimilar ſymptoms aroſe a fortnight after a miſcarriage, immediately on a *menorrhagia*, which ſucceeded this, being ſuppreſſed by cold and fatigue. To the ſymptoms of *pyrexia* ſoon ſucceeded a ſenſe of ſoreneſs and dull pain, rarely diffuſed over the whole abdomen, but much more frequently, at firſt, confined to the *epigaſtric* region; though in two inſtances, in which parturition had been more than uſually laborious, it was firſt complained of, and proved for ſome hours afterwards moſt diſtreſſing, about the *hypogaſtric* region. But in what part ſoever the pain commenced, it in a few hours became general over the whole extent of the cavity; though the umbilical region, in every inſtance which fell under

my

my care, was the moſt impatient of preſſure, and the part where the patients complained of the pain ſhooting the moſt. As accompanying this diffuſed ſtate of the pain, I always obſerved a very conſiderable tumefaction of the abdomen; a ſymptom which aroſe in my patients at a more early period from the firſt febrile paroxyſm, than it ſeems to have done among thoſe of the generality of phyſicians, who deſcribed the diſeaſe before me, and which always continued, to a more or leſs conſiderable degree, till the pain was greatly abated by the treatment, or a ſpontaneous and very copious *diarrhœa* ſupervened. This laſt circumſtance took place in one woman, whom I could not ſee before the diſeaſe had continued above twenty hours: in her the *diarrhœa* had come on ſix hours before my arrival; the ſtools were copious, and the number of them, for the time, almoſt incredible. The tenſion of the abdomen was now inconſiderable, but had been, as I was informed, very remarkable, previous to the looſeneſs ſupervening, and a vomiting which ſhe laboured under before my arrival; a great proſtration of ſtrength had taken place, as well as a violent delirium, during which ſhe talked loudly and

inceſſantly; her countenance had aſſumed much of the *facies Hippocratica*; ſhe had that circumſcribed fluſhing of the cheeks ſo conſtant in hectics, and was the only patient in whom I remarked the *red tumours* under the ſkin, near the joints, as deſcribed by Doctors Home and Denman. This patient could not be ſaid to have gotten perfectly out of danger till the fifth day after I ſaw her, though all the others recovered entirely from the alarming part of the ſymptoms by the end of the third day of the treatment.

With reſpect to the pulſe, it was conſtantly frequent, and, in general, had at firſt that quickneſs * and tenſion ſo obſervable in truly inflammatory diſeaſes; but theſe latter characters did not long continue; and as to the real frequency, that I could not clearly aſcertain, as, even at the time the pulſe retained a character ſo nearly approaching to that indicatory of a ſtate of inflammatory tenſion obtaining throughout the habit, I always obſerved that the general irritability was ſuch, that the number of pulſations would be conſiderably augmented by the

* By quick I mean *celer*; and do not employ the term to indicate frequency, as many late writers have erroneouſly done.

ſlighteſt agitation of the patient, whether this took place from noiſe, the ſudden appearance of a ſtranger, particularly a medical man, from examining the ſtate of the abdomen, &c. And this irritability became ſtill more remarkable, as in the progreſs of the diſeaſe the general weakneſs was augmented; ſo that, in the patient whoſe caſe I more particularly took notice of above, I think I might ſafely aſſert, that the ſudden opening of her chamber door would augment the ſtrokes of the artery by one half. In this woman, when I had retained her hand near fifteen minutes, on the ſecond day after I ſaw her, and ſhe appeared ſo far reſtored to a ſtate of tranquillity as to allow me to form a tolerable conjecture with regard to her pulſe, I found it equal to 130 pulſations in a minute. In the generality of caſes, however, I do not think the pulſe is quite ſo frequent; and it may not be improper further to ſtate one fact, which many are not aware of, and which I did not for a long time myſelf ſuſpect, which is, that the accuracy of the watch employed in counting the pulſe will always make a certain difference, as, the greater the accuracy of the inſtrument, the more frequent

will the pulſe appear; ſo that, having repeatedly made the experiment, I have in very frequent pulſes found a difference of twenty, and in the ordinary healthy ſtate, conſtantly of ſix or eight, in the calculation of thoſe of a minute, between the watch with which I examined this patient's pulſe and others. That the pulſe, however, is at intervals much more frequent than is ſtated above, I have acknowledged; ſo that when the patient becomes ſuddenly agitated, from an aggravation of the pain, or any of the cauſes before alluded to, it will be often found equal to 160; and I think I have under ſuch circumſtances been capable of counting 180 ſtrokes within the minute. But theſe, as only ſudden and tranſitory augmentations, are, in the general enumeration of the ſymptoms, not to be regarded farther than as indicating the high degree of morbid irritability which occurs.

The breathing was, at the height of the diſeaſe, ſomewhat oppreſſed, but not more ſo than might be expected from the ſtate of the abdomen, and the conſequent pain and difficulty attendant on the deſcent of the diaphragm.

The ſkin was, at the commencement, conſtantly

ſtantly hot and dry, and continued in that ſtate while the pain was ſevere; though I have in ſeveral inſtances obſerved the tongue at this time moiſt, and of rather a florid red colour; in ſome, however, it was furred, as well as the teeth, as is common in the ordinary infectious fever; a ſymptom which was very remarkable in the patient I ſaw in the advanced ſtage of the diſeaſe, as well as in one of thoſe attacked in the lying-in ward. In moſt of the patients a ſickneſs, nauſea, and reaching ſupervened in the courſe of the firſt day; but the ſpontaneous vomiting was not conſiderable in any, except that one whoſe caſe I deſcribed; and this ſymptom had in a great meaſure ceaſed before I ſaw her. In ſome, however, no ſickneſs occurred, as was particularly the caſe in that woman, who was ſeized in the ward ſo ſoon after delivery. The body in all was at firſt bound, and the thirſt conſiderable; the pain, after a few hours continuance, became ſo ſevere, that the generality of the patients lay on the back, and could not bear the weight of even the ſheets; and in the woman who was attacked ſo ſoon after delivery, it was ſuch as to deprive her of the power of diſtinct articulation; ſo

that ſhe lay uttering a hideous interrupted cry, but totally incapable of anſwering any queſtion. In moſt of the women, from the violence of the pain, the countenance was ſomewhat diſtorted; a ſymptom which in this one was very remarkable: and this was the only patient likewiſe in whom a *ſubſultus tendinum* was in any degree conſtant, though in moſt of them, and particularly that one who was ſo much exhauſted by the *diarrhœa*, this ſymptom would conſtantly ſupervene from any ſudden agitation.—The ſtate of the *urine* I could never accurately aſcertain; and as to the *lochial* diſcharge, ſo far as I could judge, it was at the beginning rather diminiſhed, and in ſome wholly ſuppreſſed, though it never failed to re-appear to a certain degree towards the end of the diſeaſe, and, in a few, its return was attended with a ſoreneſs and excoriation of the *labia externa*. This was moſt remarkable in that woman who had the colliquative *diarrhœa:* in this patient, as the fever began on the fourth day from delivery, when the ſecretion of milk was perfectly eſtabliſhed, the diſcharge may be ſuppoſed to have ceaſed from natural cauſes; notwithſtanding which, it re-appeared before I ſaw her, and nearly

about

about the time the *diarrhœa* commenced, the breaſts having at the ſame time become flaccid, and the ſecretion in them totally interrupted. With reſpect to the ſtate of theſe organs at the commencement of the diſeaſe, the women who were attacked previous to the ſecretion of milk having obtained, and all of thoſe, ſo far as I can recollect, in whom this ſecretion had already taken place, complained of ſhooting pains in them, and foreneſs to the touch, attended with an evident tenſion; but theſe, after the firſt day, and ſometimes after a few hours, went off, when the parts became quite flaccid, and diminiſhed in bulk to a degree conſiderably below what we ſhould have expected to ſee in the healthy though unimpregnated ſtate; ſo that they appeared in ſome of the women as flat as the generality of perſons of the male ſex, even of a ſpare habit, are found to have them. The *diarrhœa*, except in that one patient whom I ſaw ſo late in the diſeaſe, was not remarkable; but in her caſe the ſtools were peculiarly offenſive, as much ſo indeed as I have ever obſerved them under the worſt circumſtances of the common putrid fever; and in all, the ſtools artificially procured had a more

more than ordinary fetor.—When the more violent ſymptoms were ſomewhat abated, the patients complained of general ſoreneſs of the abdomen, pain in the back, throbbing of the temples, heavy dull pain at the forehead, and general liſtleſſneſs. Some of them were likewiſe attacked about this time with ſymptoms of *pneumonic* inflammation, and deep-ſeated circumſcribed pains in the lower belly; moſt of them had a peculiar wildneſs of the eyes for a day or two; and in one the diſeaſe alternated with a well-marked ſtate of *mania:* but this was a conſequence which had, in the ſame woman, attended on a former delivery, where no Puerperal Fever had taken place, and was likewiſe a common occurrence with other branches of her family.

RESPECTING the true nature of this diſeaſe, much has been written by men of the greateſt erudition: notwithſtanding which, I think there is great reaſon to believe that it has not been fully pointed out; but has, on the contrary, from its ſimplicity, been totally overlooked by the generality of writers, though ſome juſt hints on the ſubject have, I will allow, been dropped by others *. That it is nearly the ſame diſeaſe, in what climate or under what circumſtances ſoever it occurs, ſeems agreed on by moſt writers; as

* Among theſe I particularly allude to that ingenious and elegant writer, Mr. White, of Mancheſter; who has poſitively, and with great juſtice, I believe, aſſerted, that the Puerperal is a form of the common fever; but has not, at the ſame time, adduced and fully ſtated the proofs of his aſſertion; and who certainly treats the complication with inflammatory ſymptoms in too light a way, looking on it only as a conſequence of the preceding fever, to which little of the treatment ſhould be directed, and not as an eſſential and early part of this form of the diſorder, and one from whence the chief danger ariſes, and which of courſe requires our utmoſt attention.

it is found to differ only in the degree and intenſity of its ſymptoms, or a few other trivial reſpects, which, though capable, in a Noſological point of view, of eſtabliſhing *varieties* of the diſeaſe, are by no means ſuch as to give riſe to a diverſity in point of *genus*, or perhaps of *ſpecies*. Indeed the chief difference between the various caſes ſeems to be, that in ſome, particularly private patients, the fever approaches at its commencement more nearly to the type of the true inflammatory fever, while in thoſe who are attacked in great hoſpitals, the debility and ſymptoms of malignancy appear more early, and more ſtrongly marked: thus moſt of the ſolitary caſes, deſcribed by the Engliſh writers as occurring in private houſes, are of the former kind; while many of thoſe, which they met with in the hoſpitals here, approached more nearly to the latter; and this was pretty uniformly the caſe among thoſe which occurred in the crowded and foul *Hotel-Dieu* of Paris.—But, as the ſame variation, in point of early ſymptoms, occurs, under different circumſtances, in the Plague in Turkey, and the common infectious fever of this country, which, by every ſtrict noſologiſt, and moſt well-

well-informed practitioners, are allowed to have, each, but one genus *; so here the same conclusion may with great propriety be drawn: and whether a difference even in species ever obtains may be doubted, while we consider that a variety in the degree and violence of the symptoms is by no means sufficient to establish this; and that in all the histories which have been given of this disease, from the days of Hippocrates, who certainly had observed it, to the present time, no other difference can be discovered. If then it be allowed, that the disease is in its symptoms and other respects pretty nearly the same in every instance in which it occurs, one material step will have been gained towards facilitating the explanation of what its true nature consists in; and, in order to simplify this matter still further, I will venture, previous to adducing the proofs, to assert, that the disorder is not one *sui generis*, confined to INLYING WOMEN, but merely an unusual form of a very common disease, and

* Such I take to be the real opinion of the most celebrated among the modern nosologists; for, though two genera are given, the explanatory note seems to indicate a strong conviction, in the mind of the writer, that only one really exists.

is, in reality, no other than the common infectious fever, complicated with a more or leſs extenſive inflammation of the *peritonæum.* This opinion, though incapable of being reduced to an equal certainty with a mathematical demonſtration, will yet be rendered extremely probable, from conſidering,

That it is uniformly obſerved, that the ſame contagion, or infection, produces a ſimilar diſeaſe—

That this diſorder is, to a certainty, in itſelf infectious, and ariſes under circumſtances and ſituations the moſt favourable for the production of the ordinary contagion—

That in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh the ſimilarity of the cauſe was ſhewn by its effects, as two of the attendants on the puerperal women were ſeized with the common *ſynochus*—

That this is not a ſolitary inſtance, as in other places the ſame thing has likewiſe been obſerved—

That the converſe of the propoſition likewiſe holds; ſo that the two firſt women delivered in the lying-in ward, notwithſtanding all poſſible care taken in cleanſing and preparing it, ſix weeks previous to the reception

tion of any, were attacked with the Puerperal Fever to a very violent degree, from the common infection being introduced in the clothes of one of the patients; and in another inſtance I was enabled to foretel the occurrence of the Puerperal Fever, from a Putrid Fever obtaining in a particular houſe, at the ſame time that a woman lay in there—

That the two fevers ariſe under ſimilar circumſtances; and, though by no means confined to theſe ſeaſons, rage moſt during the warmer ſummer and autumn months, and particularly among the lower and more uncleanly ſort of women, and in crouded hoſpitals, where for a conſiderable time together it has not been poſſible to change the bedding, &c. and thereby to remove the various *fomites* where the contagion is retained—

That the two diſeaſes rage as *epidemics* very generally the ſame year. Thus theſe laſt ſix months both the one and the other were very rife—

And that the Puerperal Fever is ſure to be renewed, in the *Hotel-Dieu*, whenever circumſtances become very favourable for the production of the common infection.

If theſe conſiderations, however, ſhew that

the Puerperal Fever is produced by the ſame cauſe which gives riſe to the more ordinary infectious one of this country, the concourſe and ſucceſſion of the ſymptoms enumerated as clearly prove, that it is not the common form of it which has been deſcribed, and to which the title *Puerperal* has been given; but that a real inflammation of certain contents of the *abdomen*, as conſtantly ſhewn by the ſymptoms during life, and frequently by diſſection after death, ſupervenes, and complicates this.

It is not now neceſſary to prove that extenſive inflammation is capable of accompanying *diſeaſes* of *debility*, as, with reſpect to the common fever, Sir John Pringle and others have proved it, and, during the ordinary epidemic even of this ſeaſon, every extenſive practitioner muſt have obſerved that it is chiefly by ſuch a complication ſupervening that this fever proves directly fatal; and that that kind of inflammation, which ariſes under theſe circumſtances, is of all others the moſt dangerous, and the quickeſt in its progreſs through its different ſtages.—To theſe obſervations I ſhall further take the liberty to add one, in illuſtration of an aſſertion made above,

above, to wit, that the diſeaſe, is not wholly confined to inlying women; and affirm that a *peritonitis* frequently ſupervenes to a previous *typhus*, even in the male ſex; ſo that it is by no means uncommon, with thoſe who are converſant in diſſections, to obſerve, that the appearances after death, in perſons carried off in this way, are perfectly ſimilar to thoſe deſcribed as occurring from the Puerperal Fever. A very remarkable, though by no means a ſolitary inſtance of this kind, occurred to me about twelve months ago, in the diſſection of the ſon of an artificer in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn Fields.

What ſort of inflammation it is, which occurs in the Puerperal Fever, has not been rightly ſettled among the authors on this ſubject; ſome, as Dr. Home, aſſerting that it is an *eryſipelatous*, while others contend that it is purely *phlegmonous*. That an *apthous* or *eryſipelatous* ſtate of the *fauces*, and whole alimentary canal, often obtains in this diſeaſe, is very evident from the appearance of the tongue, &c. and the ſoreneſs and ſenſe of burning heat extending through the mouth, throat, and whole tract of the inteſtines, often inducing *diarrhœa* at a very

early ſtage of the diſorder, and not unfrequently continuing when the other ſymptoms are in a great meaſure relieved; but if, with a celebrated Phyſician and Noſologiſt, we allow that *eryſipelas* can only ariſe on a ſurface covered with *cuticle*, or its continuation, which cannot extend to the *peritonæal* coat of the *abdominal viſcera*, and with every accurate obſerver, that *eryſipelatous inflammation* is not, when pure, attended by the formation of *pus*, the morbid exudation of *coagulable lymph*, and the conſequent agglutination of neighbouring parts, we ſhall ſoon perceive that ſomething more than mere *eryſipelatous inflammation* occurs here.

That it is not however a pure and uncomplicated *peritonitis*, as the late Dr. Foſter ſuppoſed, is evident from the ſymptoms of putreſcency, which in the progreſs of the diſorder never fail to appear, from the infectious nature of the diſeaſe, from the *diarrhœa* ſo early attendant on it, as well as from a variety of other circumſtances eaſily obſervable in the concourſe and ſucceſſion of the ſymptoms.

To give a name to the inflammation which occurs here, does not ſeem a very eaſy

eaſy matter; nor does this appear ſo neceſſary, for practical purpoſes, as to point out in what its peculiarities chiefly conſiſt. In the firſt place, as was hinted above, it appears from experience to be more rapid in its progreſs, through its different ſtages, than is generally the caſe in common inflammations; and, as connected with a diſeaſe of debility, to ariſe more immediately from a congeſtion, or *plethora quoad molem*, and an highly-increaſed irritability of the part it attacks, and of the whole ſyſtem, than from a *plethora quoad ſpatium*, or a genuine increaſed tone and tenſion of the veſſels which are affected, or of the heart and arteries at large. In this, as in ſome other reſpects, it reſembles a *ſcrofulous* inflammation, which, attacking a weakly, irritable, and morbidly plethoric habit, where there appears to obtain an original or hereditary, and not, as here, a temporary perhaps, or accidental want of firmneſs and ſtrength in the coats of the veſſels, and of courſe in the ſolids at large, is of all other inflammations, next to thoſe affecting perſons who labour at the ſame time under putrid diſeaſes, that one which moſt readily runs through its

ſtages, and terminates in a ſtate of abſceſs, or peculiar form of gangrene, the ſooneſt.

Why, when a general increaſed irritability, and propenſity to this kind of inflammation, occurs in the ſyſtem, it ſhould ſo conſtantly, in inlying women, attack the *abdomen*, may be very eaſily ſeen, and has been ſufficiently explained by others, particularly by Dr. Leake * ; and why, as attacking this cavity and

* Mr. White, on this part of his ſubject, falls very far ſhort of his uſual ingenuity, and is too haſtily led away by concluſions drawn from occurrences in the body after death, when he aſſerts that the reaſon why the *omentum*, and other contents of the *abdomen*, in the living ſubject and inlying ſtate, are more certainly attacked with inflammation, and ſooner degenerate into gangrene, than other parts, is their vicinity to the *uterus* and inteſtines, through which he ſuppoſes a putrid matter to tranſude, contrary to many of the beſt eſtabliſhed doctrines of modern Phyſiology. But it is not merely for the purpoſe of ſupporting theſe doctrines, that I have reluctantly taken notice of this error ; it is becauſe that, overlooking the real ſource of the inflammation, viz. a ſudden and highly-increaſed determination to theſe parts by the preceding febrile paroxyſm, he from thence is led in his practice to neglect, and even condemn, one of the moſt powerful reſources with which the healing art ſupplies us, for the early relief of the inflammatory part of the affection, and, in the whole tenor of his obſervations,

and its contents, it ſhould, by increaſing the fever, and by being itſelf in return ſo much aggravated therefrom, prove ſo dangerous, if not ſpiritedly combated, has been hinted at above, and may from very little reflection be clearly diſcovered.

It will perhaps be urged, that the common infectious fever often attacks inlying women, without being attended by the affection of the *abdomen*, and the other ſymptoms characteriſtic of the Puerperal diſeaſe. This I will readily acknowledge, as having myſelf obſerved it more than once; but to this objection I would anſwer—that, though the Puerperal ſtate leaves females peculiarly liable to the attacks of infectious fever, and, when attacked, to this complication of the diſeaſe, yet it does not neceſſarily follow, that ſuch a complication ſhould always obtain, no more than it does, that that peculiar type ſhould be entirely confined to in-

ſervations, to diſregard this increaſed determination to the parts, as a ſource of danger or aggravation of the complaint; directing his endeavours ſolely to remove ſuch acrid contents of the inteſtines as might prove a ſource of irritation; which, though a neceſſary, is certainly not the only conſideration, by which we ſhould be influenced in our practice.

lying women; a circumſtance which my own obſervation, as before remarked, that of the late Dr. Foſter, and others, have clearly diſproved.—It will likewiſe be urged, perhaps, that the Puerperal Fever has frequently come on when no ſuſpicion of infection could be entertained, and merely from trivial accidental cauſes, ſuch as ſlight fatigue, from too early exertions to entertain company, &c. But to this it will be ſufficient to reply, that we never can *a priore* diſcover the preſence of contagion; that in-lying women are in a ſtate the moſt favourable poſſible for its production, and for afterwards ſuffering from its effects; and that the common *typhus*, which every intelligent perſon now allows to ariſe from infection or contagion, very frequently takes place in its pureſt form, when the ſource of the contagion can by no means be aſcertained. Beſides, as certain epidemics do at different ſeaſons, though ultimately depending on the ſame cauſe, and undoubtedly, in moſt leading points, the ſame diſorder, vary ſomewhat in their type; this will account why ſome years the infectious fever attacking in-

lying women ſhall aſſume the Puerperal, and, during other years, more frequently the ordinary type.

There is one circumſtance, indeed, which, while we look on the Puerperal Fever as a form of the common *ſynochus* or *typhus*, may at firſt ſight appear unaccountable; to wit, the quickneſs with which every ſymptom of the diſorder, when at all relieved, diſappears; while it is pretty generally obſerved, that the more ordinary forms of the diſeaſe require, under the moſt judicious treatment, a conſiderable ſpace of time for this purpoſe. Were I inclined to indulge in mere hypotheſis and ſpeculation here, I might ſay that this phænomenon could be accounted for from the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, while the powers of the ſyſtem remain ſomewhat active, being always rouſed to a more conſiderable degree, in proportion as the impending danger is greater; and in confirmation of this might urge, that it is generally the moſt inſidious and leaſt violent forms, at the firſt attack, which prove in the end the moſt tedious. But avoiding, as much as poſſible, all aſſertions, which are at beſt but dubious, I ſhall only ſtate matters of fact;

which, I hope, will be ſufficient to ſhew that this perfect relief, ſo ſpeedily obtained, does not invalidate by any means the general propoſition, of the two diſeaſes being only different types of the ſame genus. In the firſt place, then, every body muſt have obſerved, that, in the worſt caſes of the common fever, though when fully and for ſome time formed, it be a tedious diſtemper; yet that, diſcovered and ſpiritedly combated at its commencement, it is often completely removed in even a ſhorter ſpace of time than the Puerperal Fever is; and that this obſervation holds more perfectly, if the accounts given us of the diſorder be juſt, with regard to the Plague; a diſeaſe, though different in ſome material reſpects, yet ſimilar in many others to the common infectious fever. As to the truth of the former part of this aſſertion, were authority neceſſary to prove it, this might be derived from that elegant and invaluable work of Dr. Monro Drummond, "*De Febribus arcendis diſcutiendiſque*," re-publiſhed at Amſterdam in 1771.

AS to diſtinguiſhing the Puerperal Fever from other diſorders, this is a matter ſo eaſily done, in general, and one which has been ſo fully taken notice of by others, that I ſhould not have ſaid any thing upon the ſubject, was I not perfectly convinced that it has frquently been confounded with a common inflammation of the bowels, unconnected with infection; which, though certainly a very different diſeaſe, is not at all times to be diſtinguiſhed from it without conſiderable attention. As an inſtance of this, taken from many others, I may mention the caſe of a lady, who was ſaid by a very judicious practitioner to be poſitively attacked with the Puerperal Fever; whoſe diſeaſe, as afterwards plainly appeared, was no other than a common obſtruction of the bowels attended with inflammation; a diſorder with which, from time to time, ſhe had been attacked, independent of lying-in, and to which ſhe had been prediſpoſed from her infancy.—The chief circumſtances which will enable us to diſtinguiſh this diſorder from the

Puerperal

Puerperal Fever, are the following. It ariſes frequently in ſituations not favourable for the production of the other, as in private houſes, the winter months, where the patient has been kept clean, quiet, and ſufficiently, or perhaps too cool; it does not come on in ſo ſudden a manner, nor is it ſo rapid in its progreſs; it is generally preceded by, and proves the conſequence of cholic pains; is accompanied throughout with obſtinate coſtiveneſs inſtead of *diarrhœa*; is attended with rather a ſlow, ſmall pulſe, which, though poſſeſſing, to a certain degree, the inflammatory jerk, is at firſt feeble in compariſon to that attendant on the commencement of the Puerperal Fever; the fever too is more generally conſequent on, than precedent to the pain, which has in this caſe, more than in the Puerperal Fever, the character of the *dolor circa umbilicum torquens*, and is neither ſo diffuſed and violent, nor early attended with ſuch ſwelling and tenſion of the *abdomen* as the other is; that general irritability of the habit, whereby the patient, in the Puerperal Fever, is ſo apt to be agitated, from ſlight cauſes, does not here obtain; the ſame ſhooting pains at firſt, and after flaccidity, and other

marks

marks of ſympathy in the breaſts, do not ariſe; nor are there that gloomy and dejected caſt of countenance, and timid apprehenſive turn of mind, which ſo ſeldom fail to attend the Puerperal Fever.

Notwithſtanding all theſe ſources of diſtinction between the two diſorders, ſtill it is not always in our power clearly to eſtabliſh this; but this matter will appear of leſs conſequence in practice, while we conſider that the treatment, which will be recommended for the Puerperal Fever, will generally prove rather ſerviceable than injurious early in the other diſorder.

There might perhaps be a poſſibility likewiſe of miſtaking inflammations of ſome of the other contents of the *abdomen* for this diſeaſe; but this I think cannot eaſily be done, if attention be paid to the circumſcribed ſtate of the pain in them, the evident leſion of the peculiar function of the part, the nature of the fever attendant, and the circumſtances of its origin, progreſs, &c.—As to confounding the Puerperal Fever with after-pains, tranſitory cholic pains, &c. this I ſhould think impoſſible to be done by any perſon fit to have patients committed to his care.

RESPECTING

RESPECTING the TREATMENT of this diſeaſe, if the pathology delivered be juſt, the following INDICATIONS are ſuch as appear proper to be held in view.

To promote, as ſpeedily and powerfully as can ſafely be done, a determination to the ſurface, and more equable diſtribution of the fluids, and thereby to remove the conſtriction induced by the fever, and the morbid determination to the abdominal contents—

To leſſen or remove all ſources of irritation, whether general as affecting the whole ſyſtem, or particular as aggravating the local complaint—

By removing the debility preſent, and by other means, to diminiſh, as ſoon as may be, the morbid irritability, whether local or general, which appears to obtain: and, under certain circumſtances, it may become neceſſary to obviate particular ſymptoms.

Theſe indications, though they may not perhaps be alluded to, in the after-part of this treatiſe, with all poſſible ſcholaſtic preciſion,

ciſion, will, however, be attended to, ſo far as is neceſſary for the purpoſe of perſpicuity and conciſeneſs.

For fulfilling the firſt of theſe, EMETICS would appear from reaſoning, and have been proved by experience, to be the principal remedies; but as, in complaints allowed to be at all inflammatory, it is pretty generally ſuppoſed that Bleeding ſhould neceſſarily precede theſe, and as the propriety of employing this remedy early in the Puerperal Fever has been ſtrongly contended for by men of the firſt reputation in this kingdom, it is proper here to take notice of the merits, that, in this diſorder, conſidered in the point of view which we have done, it may be ſuppoſed to poſſeſs.

That *general blood-letting* is in many complaints a ſovereign remedy; and that it is not only proper, but even neceſſary, in moſt REAL inflammatory diſorders, I will readily allow: but that it is at all calculated either to remove or relieve ſome kinds of inflammation, I think I may, with the judicious and learned de Haen, and many others, ſafely deny. The injuries done by receiving too implicitly the adage, "That if a diſorder be inflam-" matory you ſhould bleed," are ſo many inſtances

inſtances of the bad conſequences ariſing from the indiſcriminate application of general propoſitions to particular caſes; a circumſtance at which I hinted in the preface; and that ſuch injuries are capable of being done, and really are done, in many inflammatory caſes, by the uſe of this remedy, will readily appear from the following ſtatement. In the firſt place, the common epidemic cold that has, during ſeveral ſucceſſive ſeaſons, raged in this and other countries of Europe, though evidently attended, during many of its ſtages, with inflammation of the lungs, has ſcarcely in any inſtance been relieved by blood-letting; on the contrary, during laſt winter, when, though it did not prevail very generally, it was yet very ſevere in the caſes in which it did appear, there was hardly an inſtance, with which I was acquainted, where bleeding was employed, that the patient did not die, chiefly from an immediate aggravation of the ſymptoms of inflammation, though ſome few lingered on, ſo as to fall into *chronic* affections, particularly dropſies. This was ſo far the caſe during other ſeaſons likewiſe, that, about three years ago, when I ventured to bleed a ſtrong, athletic porter, the only

only patient I ever did bleed in this diſeaſe, though the evacuation was made as early as the third day of the diſorder, and the quantity did not exceed *eight ounces*, the oppreſſion of breathing he before laboured under was much increaſed, and the general morbid irritability induced by the diſorder ſo far aggravated, that he had for five days after a violent tremor of the extremities, which increaſed every day about noon to ſtrong general convulſions; and the *ſubſultus tendinum* did not diſappear for an entire week after this, though he was allowed a proportion of *mulled port wine* twice a day, took a bark mixture, and had his inflammatory ſymptoms pretty completely removed by bliſters and repeated emetics. It is likewiſe a well-known fact, to thoſe who are extenſively converſant with *ſcrofulous* abſceſſes, that *general bleeding*, during the inflammatory ſtate, will not prevent them; but will, on the contrary, by weakening the habit and increaſing irritability, rather haſten *ſuppuration*, or lead them to terminate in that peculiar kind of *gangrene* ſo frequently obſerved to attend them. In this way I am certain I have, in more than three inſtances, ſeen an abſceſs under

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the *faſcia lata* of the thigh brought on, which, had other ſteps been purſued, might have been prevented; and the ſame thing has been obſerved, and mentioned to me, by a particular friend, whoſe practice in this diſeaſe is at preſent very extenſive, and unuſually ſucceſsful *. In that kind of inflammation, which in warm climates, particularly the Eaſt Indies, attacks the liver, it is not by bleeding the practitioners there are enabled to combat its progreſs to ſuppuration; it is, on the contrary, by the *diaphoretic* and *generally ſtimulant* effects of *mercury*, which, by exciting a temporary ſtate of tone, tenſion, and increaſed action of the vaſcular ſyſtem, enables the veſſels of the organ oppreſſed by a congeſtion and morbid determination to it, to tranſmit their ſuperfluous contents, and by the ſame action promotes the abſorption of ſuch effuſion, if moderate, as, previous to its employment, might have taken place.

* The gentleman I allude to is Mr. Trye, of Gloceſter, who, as ſenior ſurgeon to the infirmary there, has conſtantly a very great number and variety of ſcrofulous caſes under his care, as there is no part of this kingdom, ſo far as I have been able to learn, where the diſeaſe rages to a more violent degree than it does in the neighbourhood of that city.

In

In *erysipelatous inflammation* too, bleeding is generally improper, and seldom necessary: so far as the few observations I have been enabled to make go, it pretty constantly leads it, as attacking the limbs, to terminate in gangrene, and, as affecting the face, to spread, and attack the membranes of the brain more certainly and more early.

In many instances likewise, where bleeding is really proper, and even necessary, for the relief of the earlier stages of disorders, if pushed too far, it will not only not relieve, but absolutely aggravate the complaint. Thus, in the acute rheumatism, the purest form of an inflammatory disorder which occurs, though the first bleedings prove highly serviceable, yet every person of discernment must have observed, that when the remedy is persevered in, the pains become more severe, and the remaining febrile symptoms more remarkable after each repetition; or, should this not be immediately observable, that relapses, at least, and exacerbations are more liable to arise from every slight cause, which will not, when they do occur, yield to the lancet. But it is not in this complaint alone that the bad effects of carrying bleeding too far appear; I have seen

them as evident in the common pleuriſy, unconnected with epidemic infection: in this way I remember a dragoon, who was largely bled twelve times in this complaint, who, though relieved by the three firſt evacuations, found all his ſymptoms rendered worſe by the ſubſequent ones; ſo that when his phyſician allowed the obſtinacy of his diſorder to be beyond his ſkill, the patient reſolved to take his own way, and, in order to die with a better heart, as he termed it, drank porter largely, was allowed ſome wine, and procured for himſelf ſpirits, which he uſed diluted, but in no inconſiderable quantity; and from the moment he began to purſue this conduct, he gradually recovered. I likewiſe recollect a gentleman of high rank in the army, who was remarkably fond of angling, and, in purſuit of this diverſion, expoſed himſelf to cold, and got ſeverely wetted; the conſequence was, a very well marked *acute hepatitis:* he was bled pretty largely, and had a bliſter applied, by which he was conſiderably relieved; but on a conſultation being held that evening, between the perſon who directed the early treatment, and the phyſician firſt intended to have been called

in, the latter did not think, on feeling the pulſe, the inflammatory tenſion ſufficiently removed; the patient was accordingly bled again, and his ſymptoms thereby greatly aggravated, notwithſtanding which, the ſame phyſician inſiſted on having the bleeding repeated a third time, which only tended to render the patient ſtill worſe: he then obſerved to the gentleman, that, as bleeding would not remove his inflammation, it muſt neceſſarily prove fatal, and adviſed him to ſettle his affairs in this world, and to prepare for another. To enable himſelf to do this, he was ſo very much exhauſted, he inſiſted on having ſome Port wine; which proving very grateful, he immediately drank to the quantity of eight or ten ounces, and fell aſleep, by which he found himſelf much refreſhed, and continued to take his wine until he recovered perfectly. In many hiſtories now extant, of *phthiſis pulmonalis*, we have direct proofs of the diſorder being aggravated by repeated bleedings, and the irritability attendant on the ſtate of inanition induced by low living, as by deviating from ſuch a plan, and living more fully, numbers have recovered from a confirmed ulcerated ſtate of the

lungs. This laſt obſervation, though not perfectly in point, will yet ſhow that morbid irritability and weakneſs will ſupport as well as temporarily aggravate inflammation.

All theſe remarks are introduced to prove that bleeding is wholly improper in ſome, and calculated to relieve only certain ſtages of other inflammatory diſorders: but if we attentively conſider what thoſe ſtages are, and what is the true nature of the diſorders in which it proves ſerviceable, we ſhall find that it is chiefly, perhaps only, where a temporary increaſed tone, ſtrength, or rigidity of the coats of the veſſels accompanies their increaſed or otherwiſe deranged action, and not where this deranged action is attended by a really morbid ſtate of weakneſs of theſe coats, and of the ſolids at large, whether induced by the debilitating effects of contagion, brought on by inanition and previous diſeaſes, or hereditarily derived from original conformation. If then we allow, that, in the Puerperal Fever, the inflammatory ſtate of the contents of the *abdomen* is connected with a general ſtate of debility and morbid irritability of the habit, induced by the contagious nature of the diſeaſe, and the

peculiar

peculiar ſituation of the patient; and that the increaſed action ariſes more immediately from a particular determination to the parts, and a conſequent oppreſſion and irritation of the veſſels affected, without any increaſe of the general tone of the arterial ſyſtem, or of the particular ſtrength and firmneſs of the coats of the oppreſſed veſſels, but, on the contrary, with a real weakneſs of theſe; we ſhall eaſily ſee why bleeding in this diſeaſe ſhould be frequently dangerous, and why in general it ſhould not be calculated at all to relieve it. In the firſt place, it is dangerous, as adding to the debility, and thereby not only immediately aggravating the chief ſupport of the topical congeſtion, but likewiſe increaſing the principal cauſe from which danger is, towards the end of the diſorder, to be apprehended. And, in the next place, it is not calculated to relieve the complaint, as not by any means tending to leſſen the morbid determination to the *abdomen* and the congeſtion there ſubſiſting: further, ſhould we even allow that, as diminiſhing the general quickneſs of the pulſe, and the increaſed action of the arteries at large, it might, at an early period of the diſeaſe, prevent the local

inflammation from running ſo high as it otherwiſe would, I ſhould aſſert, that in this point of view it would, on reflection, appear a ſuperfluous remedy; as univerſal experience ſhews, that in the greater number of inflammatory complaints, if emetics be given immediately on the firſt attack, the neceſſity for blood-letting will be entirely ſuperſeded. Thus, in many inſtances, they will diſſipate the common *pneumonic inflammation*; have, in Scotland, and elſewhere, by repeated trials, been proved peculiarly powerful in that dangerous form of it attacking children, the *croup*; moſt generally ſucceed when given early in the inflammatory *angina*; have conſiderable effect in diſſipating a local inflammation, which, from reaſoning, we ſhould ſuppoſe ſtill further without their reach, than thoſe previouſly mentioned—that of the teſticle; will, more powerfully than any other known remedy, prevent ſcrofulous inflammations from running on to ſuppuration, and, when perſevered in, frequently conquer the obſtinate and inſidious inflammation attendant on ſcrofulous *phthiſis*; and will beſides, as I know to a certainty, very often remove the firſt ſymptoms of an *enteritis*,

ritis and *ileus*; of this I had ample and repeated proofs in a poor emaciated patient, who, labouring under a *psoas abscess*, was an unfit subject for the lancet, but used on every, even the slightest irregularity, to be seized with an obstinate obstruction of the bowels, attended with every symptom of a dangerous inflammation attacking them. As he would not at first submit to blisters, I determined to try every means to excite a perspiration, having often found, that, until this was done, strong purgatives were injurious: for this purpose I gave him a weak solution of emetic tartar, and employed fomentations of the *abdomen*; but he derived no benefit from them for some hours, until the medicine excited vomiting, when he was almost instantly relieved, and had afterwards stools naturally. When the vomiting began, I was somewhat alarmed, being aware that this symptom, as arising spontaneously, generally aggravates the disorder; but my fears were soon at an end; and I repeatedly afterwards observed, as he had frequent returns of the attack, that, during that state of insensibility, which immediately preceded the efforts of vomiting, excited artificially, he constantly

found eaſe; ſo that I afterwards depended almoſt wholly on a gentle emetic at the commencement, followed by fomentations and opiates, for his relief; and ſo far with ſucceſs, that at length he recovered from both his diſorders. I have ſince, from the analogy of this caſe, followed the ſame practice in ſome others, to which I had been called in at an early ſtage of the diſorder, and almoſt conſtantly with ſimilar ſucceſs. Theſe obſervations tend to ſhew, that emetics prove powerful remedies at the commencement of many inflammatory diſeaſes, and may, of courſe, as before hinted, be frequently employed to ſuperſede the neceſſity of blood-letting, and may likewiſe be had recourſe to, with benefit, where the uſe of the lancet is at leaſt dubious, if not wholly inadmiſſible. This ſeems to be the caſe in the Puerperal Fever, where, though ſome commend, many, and I ſuſpect with great propriety, condemn bleeding; ſo that, on the whole, though veneſection may not in ſome few caſes aggravate the complaint, I believe it generally will, and am convinced, both from my own experience, and from that of the French practitioners, as well as from reaſoning, that it is ſeldom proper, and ſtill

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more rarely neceſſary; and, if at all admiſſible, it muſt be at a very early period of the diſeaſe, in ſtrong, robuſt patients, where the Puerperal Fever appears as a *ſporadic diſeaſe*, and not in hoſpitals, or under circumſtances where its malignancy is very characteriſtic.

How EMETICS operate in diſorders of this kind, may not, perhaps, be very eaſy to point out; that they determine to the ſurface of the body, and thereby promote a more equable diſtribution of the fluids, and, of courſe, leſſen the topical congeſtion and determination, I have before mentioned. This effect, indeed, muſt be evident to even the moſt ſuperficial obſerver, and has been, with juſtice, regarded by the Faculty of Paris, as a principal ſource of the benefit derived from them in this diſeaſe. There is, however, room to ſuſpect that this is not the only way in which they produce good effects; and that that temporary ſtate of diminiſhed ſenſibility, which the generality of emetics induce, previous to their exciting vomiting, has a great deal to do here. It might, perhaps, be urged in this place, that if theſe were the only effects of emetic medicines, in this and ſomewhat ſimilar diſorders, given ſo

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as to excite *nauſea* only, they would prove equally uſeful; but this, I know to a certainty, is not the caſe in the Puerperal Fever: and, though nauſeating medicines prove valuable in many inſtances, I think I have had repeated proofs that they have been truſted to, where vomiting would have been much more advantageous; and proofs likewiſe that they have been perſevered in, until, by weakening the ſtomach, and conſequently the whole habit, to too great a degree, their bad effects, in the end, more than counterbalanced the good ones, the more early part of their operation produced; and, as a ſort of confirmation of this matter, it may not be improper to obſerve, that, though children bear repeated emetics very well, and have many of their diſorders thereby relieved, they ſeldom, if ever, are benefited by nauſeating remedies, but conſtantly pine under their uſe, and have the febrile diſeaſes, for which they are given, much aggravated thereby; a circumſtance which will not appear ſtrange, when we conſider that nauſeating medicines keep the ſenſible and delicate ſtomach in a conſtant ſtate of *atony* and diſorder; whereas emetics, though they at firſt excite a ſimilar

ſtate,

ſtate, do ſo only temporarily, and have this afterwards removed, and fully compenſated for, by the re-action into which this organ is ſpeedily thrown, independent of the benefits that may ariſe from diſcharging its morbid contents, which had, perhaps, proved the chief ſource of many of the previous ſymptoms. But in what manner ſoever emetics operate, the neceſſity for their employment, and the benefits to be from thence derived in this diſorder, have been very fully ſhewn by their ſucceſs in the *Hotel Dieu* of Paris, and ſince confirmed to me, not only by my own experience, but likewiſe by the obſervations of thoſe who affect to treat them as trivial remedies, calculated only for the relief of certain ſymptoms in particular caſes of this diſeaſe. Thus any one, who attentively weighs the obſervations made by Dr. Denman, relative to the Puerperal Fever, will clearly perceive that it was by means of an emetic alone he cured the ſoldier's wife, whoſe caſe he mentions as ſo extraordinary; and that he had conſtantly, in thoſe inſtances where he was ſucceſsful, recourſe to his powder of *tart. emet.* and *occul. cancro.* which, in the end, produced vomiting: and

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the late Dr. Foſter found his infuſion of chamomile, early and repeatedly given, ſo effectual, that, to uſe his own words, " he did " not find a diſorder, of equal apparent dan- " ger, nearly ſo obedient to the laws of me- " dicine :" and an attention to the obſervations of many other writers on the ſubject tends likewiſe to confirm the ideas here entertained of their utility. With regard to the time of exhibiting the *emetic*, I conſtantly directed it as ſoon as poſſible. This the French practitioners think almoſt abſolutely neceſſary ; and I am led to believe it highly proper : but in that patient, who had been attacked ſo long before I ſaw her, I likewiſe ordered an *emetic*, and this with very evident and almoſt inſtantaneous good effects ; ſo that though the chance in favour of the patient be not ſo great, from the medicine given at an advanced, as it is when exhibited at an early period of the diſorder, ſtill it ſhould in very few inſtances be neglected. There are indeed caſes, where, from the duration of the diſeaſe previous to Medical Aid being called in, eſpecially among the lower claſſes of people, the exhauſted ſtrength of the patient will not admit of the immediate

immediate employment of a vomit; but, from ſome caſes which I have lately ſeen, where patients, though apparently at firſt extremely weak, bore an emetic remarkably well, I ſhould be apt to ſuppoſe that this cauſe is erroneouſly urged, in not a few inſtances, againſt its employment. Another obſervation, the reſult of four caſes of advanced Puerperal Fever, which I have ſeen ſince I began this treatiſe, is, that though the emetic, from the great debility, may be inadmiſſible at firſt, yet the relief obtained from other means is frequently deluſive; and therefore that, as ſoon as by gentle cordials, opiates, &c. the ſtrength is ſomewhat recruited, a vomit ſhould be given, as otherwiſe, though the ſymptoms ſhould have diſappeared for ſome days, they will be apt to return with increaſed violence; a circumſtance which took place, after an interval of ſix days, in one, and nearly as many in another of theſe patients, who had not had emetics, whereas no ſuch thing obtained in the other two, in whom they had, in the courſe of their recovery, been employed.

With reſpect to the kind of emetic proper to be made uſe of, the French think *ipecacuanha*

anha a ſpecific; but I had ample proof, in more than one caſe, that its effects were too tranſitory, and was, on that account, obliged to repeat it. In all the late inſtances, therefore, where I have treated this diſeaſe, I have not truſted to it alone, but have ordered *gr. xv.* of it to be diffuſed in a ſolution of *gr. ij.* of *tart. emet.* as thereby inſuring the operation of the medicine, on the one hand, and rendering this leſs tranſitory, on the other: one half of this quantity was immediately given, and the other in half an hour afterwards, if the firſt did not operate fully. The patients drank largely likewiſe of the infuſion of chamomile flowers, which, after it had ſupported the vomiting for ſome time, generally ceaſed at length to do ſo, but appeared to act pretty conſtantly as a gentle laxative in the end. When the diſeaſe was treated in this way, I never but once found it neceſſary to repeat the emetic, and this was in the perſon prediſpoſed to *mania*, on whom the whole quantity, taken as directed, had but a very ſlight effect.

After the operation of the emetic, the patients were generally inclined to doze, in which they were not long encouraged, from

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my having been well convinced that ſleep is an inſidious ſtate, in which, under certain circumſtances, diſeaſes of debility are much aggravated; and that the precious time, in inſtances of the Puerperal Fever, during which other remedies might be uſed to increaſe and continue the benefits derived from the emetic, would be thereby loſt. They likewiſe were conſtantly thrown into a pretty copious perſpiration; to encourage which, as well as with a view to leſſen the irritation, and remove the tenſion of the *parieties* of the *abdomen*, which, as proved by the *phenomena* of CHOLIC, and other diſeaſes, ſympathiſe ſo immediately with their contents, I ordered this part of the body to be fomented with very large doubled flannels wrung out of hot water, and this operation to be perſevered in for at leaſt an hour each time, and repeated two or three ſeveral times, at the ſhort interval of an hour *. In this way I found that the

* I have always, ſince I began to treat this diſeaſe, reflected with great aſtoniſhment on the laconic condemnation of the uſe of fomentations in it by Mr. White, and regretted that a gentleman of his abilities and information ſhould puſh a favourite ſubject, I mean the cool treatment, to a very erroneous length. I am myſelf very

the ſymptoms of pain, tenſion, &c. were very conſiderably relieved, and the perſpiration more powerfully and effectually ſupported, than by the uſe of any *nauſeating* or other form

very well convinced, that much ſweating is the moſt dangerous evacuation to which inlying women, or patients labouring under the generality of acute diſeaſes, can be ſubjected; and therefore, among my own patients, lay it down as a rule never either to promote or encourage it in the inlying ſtate, when no extraordinary accident occurs, and even then to do ſo with the greateſt caution: but when it is conſidered, that in all the inſtances which have fallen under my care, in moſt of thoſe which Dr. Hulme has obſerved, and in ſuch of their caſes as are more fully detailed by many other writers, the increaſe of pain always kept pace with the parched ſtate of the ſkin, and its relief with a moderate and gentle perſpiration; when, at the ſame time, the great advantages are conſidered, which experience proves may be derived from fomentations in this diſeaſe, and others of ſomewhat an analogous nature; when it is likewiſe conſidered, that, as a ſource of cleanlineſs, they generally benefit infectious fevers, and as *ſoporific*, when extended to the lower extremities, as proved by many years experience at the Infirmary at Edinburgh, they powerfully co-operate with *opiates* in procuring reſt, it will appear ſurpriſing, that prejudice ſhould ſo far blind a gentleman, in other reſpects poſſeſſing unuſual penetration, as to lead him, *in toto*, to condemn them. The principal argument too made uſe of by Mr. White, againſt endeavouring to promote or ſupport a gentle perſpiration

form of a *diaphoretic* remedy. I have ſometimes continued the fomentations for even two hours uninterruptedly, being convinced that their repetition, after an interruption, is

ſpiration in this diſeaſe, ſeems ſomewhat groundleſs. It is founded on an erroneous concluſion, which he entitles an *Axiom*; a term very dangerous to be introduced into the uncertain ſcience of medicine, "that the increaſe of "one evacuation always produces the diminution of "another." Hence, as the *diarrhœa* appears the real critical evacuation in the Puerperal Fever, that by the ſkin, as likely to check it, ought not to be encouraged; but, ſo far from allowing the truth of the quoted axiom, incontrovertible facts prove, that it holds at beſt but partially; as, among others, the ingenious Dr. Hamilton, of the Infirmary at Edinburgh, clearly and repeatedly ſhewed, that in dropſies, *diaphoretic* remedies, and the uſe of the warm bath, without any unuſual increaſe of the drink of the patients, while they promoted perſpiration, augmented conſiderably the quantity of urine: and what applies more immediately to the preſent purpoſe, is, that the *diarrhœa*, in every caſe which I had an opportunity of ſeeing, and in many other caſes now on record, commenced and continued ſalutary only as accompanied by a perſpiration; and when this was, from any accidental cauſe, checked, the tenſion, pain, and other affections of the *abdomen*, were augmented, and the coſtiveneſs, which accompanied the early part of the diſorder, renewed; or, ſhould the looſeneſs ſtill continue, it became exceſſive and colliquative, and not critical and ſalutary.

not half ſo advantageous as their continuance while benefit appears to be derived from them. In the evening too, after the pain had been, by theſe, and other means which I ſhall preſently mention, pretty completely ſubdued, I extended them to the lower extremities, not only as a ſource of cleanlineſs, but likewiſe as co-operating with the opiate given to procure reſt, which, though not admiſſible immediately on the firſt relief obtained, became now adviſeable. In the interval between the firſt and ſecond, or between this and the third application of the fomentations, I never neglected ordering a clyſter, which generally conſiſted of a ſolution of ʒ*vj*. of *ſal cath. amar.* or of an equal quantity of *ſoluble tartar*, either in ℔*j*. of warm water alone, or of an infuſion of chamomile flowers. This, as acting as an internal fomentation, generally co-operated powerfully in diminiſhing the remaining pain, and as removing a ſource of irritation, by procuring one or generally more evacuations, proved no leſs advantageous. As the patients were always thirſty, they were allowed at firſt ſome weak acidulated drink, generally a little warm; but after ſome hours, leſt by exhauſting them too far

far by the perſpiration, the increaſed weakneſs and irritability might give riſe to a relapſe, I always allowed them ſomething cordial. The poorer, and thoſe in the ward, had from half a pint to a pint of good porter warmed, and with nutmeg, given to them, of which they took a little from time to time, their ſtomachs not being able to bear much at once. The other patients had eight or ten ounces of equal parts of Port wine and water, mulled with cloves and cinnamon, allowed to be taken in the ſame manner. Theſe conſtantly produced eructations, and a conſiderable diſcharge of *flatus* from the ſtomach and inteſtines, by which the patients found themſelves conſiderably relieved, and their ſtrength recruited. At the approach of night, or after it was judged ſafe, an OPIATE, as I hinted before, was given: this was never very powerful, and was generally conveyed in ſome ſtimulant *medium*, as both reaſon and univerſal experience prove, that diſeaſes of conſiderable irritability, dependent on weakneſs, are frequently aggravated by the ſecondary effects of large doſes of opium: fearful of the conſequences of theſe effects, even from a ſmall doſe, I generally added, as

a ſtimulant, not likely, ſo far as I could judge, to be attended with ſimilar diſadvantages, an equal quantity of the *liquor Hoffmanni anodynus*, from 10 or 12 to 15 drops of each, or ſometimes 20 of the latter, beſides from half an ounce to an ounce of ſimple cinnamon water, &c. This draught, as aided by the ſoporific power of fomentations of the lower extremities, which, in febrile diſeaſes, is much greater than many ſuſpect, generally produced as much reſt as was judged proper; as in this diſeaſe I had ſometimes obſerved, and ſtill more frequently in the advanced ſtages of putrid fevers, as well as in a few inſtances of *Atonic Gout*, that allowing patients to ſleep many hours together, ſo far from relieving them, conſtantly aggravated the ſymptoms, ſo that they awoke, not refreſhed, but much exhauſted and oppreſſed: and I am convinced, that this cauſe alone produced a return of the ſymptoms of *Atonic Gout*, in a caſe where I was much intereſted, and where the diſeaſe afterwards proved fatal. Upon the ſame principles as I prevented too long reſt, I ordered the attendants, whenever the patients awoke, to give them a little of the cordial, as likely to prevent the ſymptoms of

weakneſs and irritability from increaſing; and if they found the pain ſtill continued ſevere, or was aggravated rather than relieved during ſleep, the fomentations were again had recourſe to, and perſevered in as before. The next day they all took a ſolution of ſome of the NEUTRAL SALTS, generally *ſal catharticus amarus*; as this, when corrected a little by the addition of ſome *carminative*, generally CINNAMON WATER and ſome ſyrup, was leſs apt than any of the reſt to excite *nauſea*; from ʒ*vj*. to ℥*j*. were generally diſſolved in a ten or twelve ounce mixture, and two ounces taken at firſt, and one ounce every three quarters of an hour afterwards, till it began to operate, after which they generally had repeated evacuations without a further uſe of the laxative. During this time they were allowed a more free uſe of ſomething cordial than the day before; the fomentations were repeated generally twice to the *abdomen*, and employed in the evening to the lower extremities. The opiate was likewiſe repeated, with an increaſe of the quantity of cinnamon water, and of the *liquor Hoffmanni*, but rarely with that of the *tinctura thebaica*. By the beginning of the third day, the patients

tients were generally ſo far relieved, that nothing remained except a general languor, a ſenſe of ſoreneſs internally in the *abdomen*, and ſome pain in the back and head. During this day the fomentations of the *abdomen* were repeated twice, and thoſe of the extremities immediately after the opiate, as before; and the patients took ſome ſtimulant mixture, ſometimes containing *confectio cardiaca*, but more commonly camphire with an addition of *ſpiritus vitrioli dulcis*.

In a few inſtances I gave bark rubbed down with *Quick Lime*, or *Calcined Magneſia*, and diffuſed in a ſtimulant mixture, conſiſting of an addition of *tinct. cort. Peruv.* cinnamon water, and *ſpiritus vitrioli dulcis*, to the ordinary medium: but neither in theſe inſtances, nor in a variety of caſes of the more common form of the infectious fever, did I obſerve benefit derived from it; on the contrary, as not ſufficiently ſtimulant, it appears, when given alone, in ſuch caſes, to be inert; and when taken in ſubſtance, independent of its not producing good effects, really to occaſion bad ones, by oppreſſing the ſtomach, as all ſolids at this time do. The wine or porter, and ſometimes a mixture of brandy

brandy and water acidulated, were continued; but, till the middle of the third, or beginning of the fourth day, all food was prohibited; and I cannot help obſerving, that the pernicious effects of giving ſolid food too early to febrile patients are but too little attended to; and that this, whether allowed by the phyſician, or, as is more commonly the caſe, given contrary to his directions by the nurſe, proves frequently the ſource of the fatality of theſe diſorders, in ſpite of the moſt judicious treatment of the patient in other reſpects. By the fourth day the patients were all, except that one I particularly mentioned, ſo far recovered, that they required nothing more than the common attention neceſſary for inlying women. I however, for a few days, continued the ſtimulant mixture; prevented them from getting out of bed ſo ſoon as I ſhould otherwiſe have allowed them*; had the clyſter, if neceſſary, repeated; and continued the opiate, and the fomentations, at

* This precaution, though condemned by a few, will, I apprehend, be vindicated by the generality of practitioners, when it is conſidered how much early muſcular exertion will exhauſt the remaining ſtrength of convaleſcents from fevers.

night,

night, of the lower extremities. As to the opiate, I ſometimes, at the beginning, and generally the ſecond and third night, combined it with ſome medicine to render it more *diaphoretic*. When this was done the firſt night, it was commonly with VOL. ALKALI, as I was apprehenſive of ſupporting *nauſea* too long, or unneceſſarily renewing the vomiting, by employing ANTIMONIALS for this purpoſe. The latter, however, were the medicines which, after the diſordered ſtate of the ſtomach had fully ſubſided, I preferred, as rather more powerful in their effects; but I never continued any of them many evenings together, as evidently unneceſſary, and poſſibly miſchievous, as the fact is now ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, that ſweating, if not advantageous, will undoubtedly prove hurtful during the inlying ſtate.—I had rarely occaſion to employ any other remedies, as few extraordinary ſymptoms aroſe; but was once obliged to have recourſe to BLISTERS, and ſometimes found *ſpaſmodic* affections of the bowels troubleſome in the courſe of the recovery. With reſpect to BLISTERS, it was only to relieve a troubleſome pain of the ſide, and difficulty of breathing, that I had

recourſe

recourſe to them; theſe ſupervened, in one inſtance, ſoon after the relief of the affection of the *abdomen*, but were relieved by a bliſter. This remedy has by many been highly extolled for the relief of the affection of the *abdomen* in the Puerperal Fever, and is certainly powerful in checking deep-ſeated inflammation: but I was never inclined to truſt to it in this diſeaſe, in preference to fomentations, as in the firſt place not calculated to ſupport the *diaphoretic* effects of the emetic, a reaſon why theſe ſhould likewiſe be preferred to EMBROCATIONS of warm brandy, &c.; and, in the next place, as I feared bliſters, in a diſeaſe whoſe progreſs is ſo rapid, would often come too late; ſo that was an irritation, excited on the ſurface of the *abdomen*, to appear equally advantageous with fomentations in this diſeaſe, I ſhould certainly prefer SINAPISMS; but, as wanting that power of ſupporting a perſpiration I alluded to before, and which fomentations poſſeſs, I think neither of them can be put in competition with theſe, eſpecially when perſevered in, in the manner I have recommended. TOPICAL BLEEDING has of late been highly extolled, in the ſame point of

view as blisters, and, though much neglected in this city, is certainly, in a variety of diseases, a valuable remedy; but in this disorder, while emetics and fomentations so quickly and powerfully relieve the local affection, it would be wrong to trust to topical bleeding at the commencement, and it afterwards becomes, in general, unnecessary, and might perhaps become improper. As to the *spasmodic* affections of the bowels, which were commonly accompanied with the *globus hystericus*, they constantly yielded to a renewal of the fomentations, and the use of the *enema fœtidum*; and I am inclined to suspect that the chief ingredient in this, the *asa fœtida*, would, in certain forms, prove a very proper stimulant during the recovery of the patient. Independent of the use of these general remedies, attention was constantly paid to the avoiding of all irritation, from noise, light, heat, &c.: and for this latter purpose, though a perspiration was encouraged by the means I have already mentioned, the bodies of the patients were kept thinly covered; the feet indeed were kept warm, but the temperature of the room was always low, and the greatest attention was

paid to cleanlineſs and the purity of the air. With theſe views the patients had their temples and hands waſhed frequently with tepid vinegar and water, and this acid was either ſprinkled on the floor frequently throughout the day, or evaporated in the room; the window of the chamber, when the weather was warm, if the ſtream of air was not likely immediately to affect the patient, was kept raiſed, and the other neceſſary ſteps taken for keeping the patients cool, clean, and quiet, which are purſued in the common form of fever by the greater number of practitioners.

F I N I S.